



King County

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January 2007

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REGION

Housing affordability is a complex issue driven by a variety of forces, primarily market forces. King County is taking seven actions to deliver additional affordable housing.

1. Cities must allow more density

All cities in the region have the responsibility to adopt regulatory and incentive measures to promote more density within their jurisdictions. Duplexes, town homes, accessory dwelling units, and cottage housing are popular higher density options in our urban areas. While not all high density housing is affordable, the higher density zoning allows smaller units to be built, which can be more affordable than traditional large single family houses.

2. Growth Management Planning Council Housing Tool Kit

The County Executive has directed staff to begin a city-by-city assessment of actions taken under Growth Management Planning that can help the development of affordable housing. In 2001, the King County Growth Management Planning Council developed the Housing Toolkit to identify steps for producing more affordable housing throughout the county. King County, along with several cities, has adopted many of the recommendations of the Tool Kit such as permitting accessory dwelling units and cottage housing and looking for other opportunities to increase residential densities. But, it is not known precisely how much of the guidance and recommendations have been employed throughout the county and what effect these measures have had on producing affordable housing. King County will take the lead on evaluating how the Tool Kit has been used throughout the county in the past six years and prepare an analysis for the Growth Management Planning Council to consider.

3. Work with the development community

Since it is the private sector that builds the vast majority of new housing units, King County will be working with the development community to address housing affordability and specifically identify barriers to getting smaller, affordable housing units built. In order to make progress in solving the housing affordability issue, the private sector will have to play a role.

4. Incentives for Transfer of Development Rights

All cities in King County should be providing incentives for identifying receiving sites for transfers of development rights from rural King County. These receiving sites would have higher density zoning in exchange for purchasing developing rights from the rural area and then transferring these rights to an urban location. We need to focus growth in urban areas where facilities and services can be provided more cost effectively than in outlying areas of the county.

5. Transit Oriented Development

King County will continue to work with the cities to identify Transit Oriented Development (TOD) sites where affordable housing can be provided in conjunction with a park and ride lot or other transit facility. The county urges Sound Transit and Regional Transportation Investment District to focus on transit oriented development in current and future projects. With 730 rental units planned for developments at Northgate and Redmond, 205 will be affordable to very low income households and 127 units will be senior housing.

The county is working with Burien, Auburn, Kirkland and White Center to help develop mixed income housing with easy access to park and ride lots or transit centers.

6. State opportunities

We will work with Governor Gregoire's office to employ some of the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Task Force. Working with the state, we need to identify and implement incentives to providing more affordable housing such as funding for infrastructure improvements necessary for growth in the urban areas.